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Perspectives

A MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FRATERNITY/SORORITY ADVISORS

HOW FAR HAVE WE COME?

In consideration of
Women of Discriminating Taste: White Sororities and the Making of American Ladyhood

aPerspectives

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FROM THE EDITORS

Earlier in 2022, the Perspectives Editorial Board engaged in conversation about the purpose of the publication. In that conversation, a question emerged: what is the future of fraternities and sororities? After a lively discussion, the next question surfaced: is there a future for fraternities & sororities? Of course, that brought about an even more lively discussion, but with a very conclusive end result. There absolutely is a future, made brighter if we begin to bring light to some of the conversations only spoken about in darkness.

Our profession cannot continue to hide from the elephants in the room. We must truly grapple with the challenges that exist within our organizations and our professional community, and explore if the way in which we are serving our members and ourselves is not only aligned with the purpose of our organizations, but with the relevant needs of our community today.

We can't always talk about the elephant in the room, because the room wasn't created for everyone to begin with. We also have to examine the room. Who truly has access and power to set the parameters for what is deemed acceptable in our profession and in our organizations? How do we champion equity work in a community first built for an exclusive group of people? How do we do all of this while remaining attentive to the always-urgent-yet-sometimes-unimportant needs of our members, staffs, volunteers, and stakeholders?

The goal in this issue was to provide a platform for members to fill in the blank: "I believe there is a future for fraternity/sorority, but only if we tackle ____." The articles in this issue begin to name some of the root causes holding us back from a successful future. We also acknowledge, with significant work still to be done, there are voices and topics still missing from this conversation. Voices from individuals who, out of fear for safety or fear of retribution, hold valuable perspectives and lived experiences that need to be included as this narrative evolves.

As we kick off a new year, we challenge members to consider this issue as we continue to make decisions about not only how we advocate for the member experience, but also how we interact with each other as part of this profession. Let's show up in ways that are authentic, critical, and respectful; examining not just the experiences we create, but the experiences we live. When we all do that, we certainly will be leaning into a future of which we can all be proud.

Tyler Havens & Emilie Dye
AFA Perspectives Editors

Letter from the President

Noah Borton

The editors and authors of this issue pose a compelling and important question. What must we do to realize the future we aspire to experience? While the need for answers to this question is obvious, the time needed to ponder such a question can easily slip through our fingers. Even as I write this letter I am struggling to find sufficient focus and energy to crank out a page of coherent thoughts. Rather, my mind is quickly wandering to program supplies that need to be packed, texts requiring a response, and hope that our copier will miraculously stop getting paper jams today.

A frequent refrain I share with a good friend in our industry is "we get to keep the house and the car for another week." I did enough by Friday to get invited back on Monday. Call it a win.

This focus on what is immediately in front of me is necessary at some points. I highly doubt the students at our leadership academy this weekend will care about my bold new ideas and grand visions if I forget to order their lunch, or don't pack their workbooks. Of course, it is easy to slip into a self-perpetuating cycle whereby that which is right in front of me is always maximally urgent. This can create a rut in which we are stuck recreating what we have done before, and reacting to what is coming at us.

With this issue, the *Perspectives* team gives us all the necessary reminder that a successful future for fraternities and sororities, and the professional work of supporting them, is not guaranteed. Finding that future is going to require creativity and innovation. We cannot just do the same thing repeatedly, hoping the environment and market will persist.

A continual work cycle of reaction and reproduction is not going to be conducive to innovation. In fact, it is the exact type of thinking that can lead organizations to double down on existing norms and practices even as they lose relevance in an evolving market. History is full of case studies of organizations and industries that thought they didn't need to change. Even more troubling are the examples of organizations that continued investing in business practices and products as they were being left behind by innovations and market evolution.

However, if we are going to aspire to innovate our way toward a new reality we must also recognize what that means. This requires more than a quippy applause line about enrollment trends, or a hot take on Twitter about the trending topic of the day. Many of our existing practices have been in place because they have been successful at one time. People keep doing something because they like it. Letting go of these things will not be easy. We will not move beyond our existing norms without hard work and perseverance.

True innovation in our practice will require an in depth understanding of market dynamics and student needs, while also recognizing current realities as they are, rather than as we would wish them to be. We must recruit, train, and retain elite talent. Innovation will only be sustainable if it leads to new revenue sources. We will need collaboration among headquarters staff, campus professionals, volunteers, board leaders, students, and entrepreneurs. Finally, this will take time.

I look forward to taking this opportunity to challenge myself to reflect upon my work, to identify norms we must let go, and to ideate what the fraternity and sorority experience, and our professional practice of fraternity and sorority advising work, can become.

What's Your Perspective?

Join us on social media to share your perspective on the topics included in this issue of *Perspectives*.

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Perspectives

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THREE SIDES TO THE SAME COIN

DR. COREY ESQUENAZI, IAN ANDERSON & GUILLERMO FLORES

Humans tend to get tunnel vision, especially when it comes to issues that matter to them. Expertise and different viewpoints are ignored, and people barrel through ignoring the many perspectives that may be needed to solve complex problems. This is abundantly clear in the advice of the fraternity and sorority community. Campus-based professionals, local chapter advisors, and headquarters staff sometimes are at odds on how best to support the students they all serve. Conflicting approaches can cause chaos and confusion at the chapter level, leaving students unsure of who they should listen to. However, not all is doom and gloom. Sometimes these entities have a synergy that translates to an effective unified message undergraduates can understand. This unified message allows student leaders to lead confidently and know the advice they are receiving is sound. For the fraternity and sorority community to continue being relevant in society, campus-based professionals, local chapter advisors, and headquarters staff need to have a unified message. To do this they must understand each other's point of view. This article brings in the perspectives of a campus-based professional, a local chapter advisor, and a headquarters staff member on how they view each other and their thoughts on what issues are holding the interfraternal community back.

Campus Based Professional (Corey):

Mending fences and building bridges might seem like I am describing a carpenter and an engineer, but it's how I view the role of the campus-based sorority and fraternity professional. You can also add another occupation to my analogy, an interpreter. To move forward as a community the structural foundations of the bridge must be strong, the coat of paint on the fence must be dry and situations should be translated clearly. To expand on these analogies' relationships between campuses, chapter advisors and headquarters must be tended to regularly or the "paint" relationship will wear thin. The foundations of these relationships must be strong and built from a place of trust. Finally, we must use a common language or at least understand the language the other speaks so misunderstandings don't arise. Having worked as a headquarters staff member, serving as a local chapter advisor and now as a campus-based professional, I have seen we all want the same things. For our undergraduates to have an excellent experience we all must come together to build the bridge, paint the fence and share the same language.

Local Chapter Advisor (Ian):

The fraternity and sorority community provides students with unique experiences cultivated by the values, history, and rituals of their respective organizations. Providing strong guidance and mentorship is the key to ensuring a fraternity/sorority unlocks its full potential on its campus and in its surrounding community. The guidelines a chapter must follow are derived from the rules and regulations of their headquarters as well as those of their institution. While most rules and regulations will align, there will be instances in which some conflict. This is when coordination and communication between the chapter members, headquarters staff, and campus officials can become difficult. At the intersection of these three groups is the local chapter advisor who is the appointed representative entrusted with safeguarding the welfare of a chapter. However, a chapter advisor cannot guarantee the welfare of their chapter without fostering a strong relationship with both headquarters staff and campus officials. Trust is the cornerstone of these relationships, developed through honest and open communication between all parties. Conversations with a chapter advisor should not be happening only for disciplinary reasons related to their chapter. A chapter advisor needs to establish recurring meetings with both parties, individually, to stay up-to-date on relevant policy and procedure changes that may concern the chapter. When it comes to their chapter, a chapter advisor may, unintentionally, have a biased viewpoint. These meetings should be transparent, allowing both sides to discuss where the chapter is excelling and where the chapter may need improvement. These objective opinions help to create a holistic picture, allowing for a better understanding of the chapter and how best to meet the members' needs. We as a community cannot not move forward until we build foundational trust with one another by having those critical conversations. Formulating a strong and more unified message to our community means knowing where our strengths and weaknesses exist at the chapter, campus, and national levels.

Headquarters Staff Member (Guillermo):

After being on the campus side for six years and then going to the headquarters side in 2021, you see how much in common we all have. The fact that the term "side" for headquarters and campus is daily language in our world already says enough. After time working at a headquarters, I can see now we all want what is best for the students. I pride myself in always being a campus partner that worked alongside headquarters and advisors. Now I get to bring that in my work at a headquarters. Working at a headquarters has truly shown me how much the staff and organization partners with campus professionals and do what is needed so that support is not only seen but present. When it comes to working together, we all have information beneficial for all. I have been able to still connect with my campus colleagues and it has been mutually beneficial. We all have a different perspective crucial to the conversation needed to best support students. Many of us in fraternity and sorority life volunteer in different capacities with our own or fellow organizations. We need to give each other more grace and be as transparent as possible with communication. The world is already a hard enough place to be without the added barriers we put to being on "this side" or 'that side." Pick up the phone and start the conversation early and not just when it is all about to hit the fan. I have been able to work with campus partners before we head to campus for an expansion project and it has been extremely beneficial, our campus partners go above and beyond fulfilling our request to provide a new fraternity experience on campus and we are very grateful. What has been the most helpful is remembering that if we say we are going to center students in our work, then we must do this early on.

Closing Argument/Thesis:

A common theme derived from these three perspectives is to cultivate relationships among all stakeholders of the fraternity and sorority community. While it may seem simple to most, fostering relationships and communication is a process that takes time. Relationships should never be one-off conversations, or only happen when things have gone wrong. It is far too common that stakeholders do not prioritize or forget to prioritize these relationships. Adding to this problem is the turnover of staff members at the headquarters and campus level, and the lack of communication with advisors.

There are several recommendations the authors feel could help alleviate some of these issues. First, a standing meeting should be scheduled for advisors, campus-based professionals, and headquarters staff a minimum once a semester to make sure all parties are on the same page. Second, anytime there is a turnover in personnel all parties should be informed, as well records should be updated regularly on websites. Finally, each stakeholder should extend grace to each other and go into conversations in good faith and full support of the students in mind. These small changes can go a long way in building a more unified message. We leave you with this question; what are you doing to foster relationships between your counterparts in the fraternity and sorority community?

Dr. Corey Esquenazi

Dr. Corey Esquenazi currently serves at the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life at High Point university. A proud triple alumnus of the University of Central Florida Dr. Esquenazi was the first in his immediate family to graduate with a college degree. Dr. Esquenazi is a brother of Theta Chi Fraternity, having served as a consultant for Theta Chi, Dr. Esquenazi regularly volunteers for the organization.

Dr. Esquenazi has over 10 years of higher education experience having previously worked at the University of Pittsburgh, University of Central Florida and Christopher Newport University. Dr. Esquenazi lives with his fiancé Corrinna and their two long hair miniature dachshunds Corduroy Jones and Hamish Persimmon in Graham North Carolina.

Ian Anderson

Ian Anderson attended Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia. He was initiated into the Sigma-Lambda Chapter of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity in 2016 where he served as his chapter's A Greater Cause (Community Service) Chair. After graduation, he became a volunteer alumni advisor for the Sigma-Lambda Chapter in 2019. As the Sigma-Lambda chapter advisor he was faced with many challenges, the biggest being the COVID-19 pandemic. He helped enable the Sigma-Lambda chapter to have a successful continuity of operations even while fully virtual. As of 2022, he is now serving as the volunteer alumni advisor for the Nu Chapter of Kappa Sigma at William and Mary College. For his career, Ian Anderson is a Lead DevSecOps Engineer at Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren where he focuses on secure cloud architecture and automation. Embracing a Kappa Sigma motto "Not for a day, or an hour, or a college term only, but for life", Ian strives to give back to his fraternity and guarantee that future generations receive the benefits and opportunities Greek life has to offer.

Guillermo Flores

Guillermo Flores is a proud first generation American and college student. His parents are from Mexico. He currently resides in Villa Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Guillermo is a brother of Phi Kappa Tau Fraternity and loves going back to his alma mater, Southern Illinois University.

Professionally, Guillermo is the Digital Media Director at Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity Headquarters and has a passion for helping fraternity and sorority members tell their stories.

Guillermo has received awards and honors for his work including Phi Delta Theta Fraternity's campus professional of the year, a two-time recipient of Theta Chi Fraternity's Citation of Honor (the highest honor a non-member can receive), Phi Kappa Tau's Phi Award for outstanding service, and the Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values 2021 Outstanding Fraternity/Sorority Professional of the Year award winner.
In July 2020, Guillermo found himself with the extra time to pursue a passion project and created "Fraternity Social Media" on Instagram. It has now grown to a community of over 2,600 leaders from around the country who view Guillermo's content as a resource.

HOW FAR HAVE WE COME?

In consideration of *Women of Discriminating Taste: White Sororities and the Making of American Ladyhood*

KATHERINE CARNELL

Published in 2020, Margaret L. Freeman's text *Women of Discriminating Taste: White Sororities and the Making of American Ladyhood* is a comprehensive historical perspective of white national sororities within the twentieth century. Arranged both thematically and chronologically, the book begins with a deeply detailed description of the early and middle decades of the 1900s, moving forward through approximately 1975. Primarily derived from extensive analysis of national fraternity and sorority archival material, Freeman (2020) judiciously depicts the white sorority experience, carefully critiquing sorority social education, heterosocial dating and relationships, the rush process, and sororities' propensities to further conservative political ideology. The author frames her analysis in the sororities' use, perpetuation, and adherence to a very specific form of femininity, which she deems a "southern aesthetic" (Freeman, 2020). Freeman (2020) specifically centers NPC sororities, not simply because of the use of their archival files, but in support of her argument that while white women sororities "may have served as a valuable role as spaces of women's friendships during the early years of coeducation, they have always been conservative in nature and inherently discriminatory" (p. 4). This text is rich in detail, and there is much to unpack.

"The southern aesthetic"

Gender does not exist on its own, rather it is something individuals *perform* – in other words, gender is a construct one *enacts*, not something one *possesses* (McCready & Radimer, 2020, p. 152). Freeman (2020) frames her analysis in gender performativity (Butler, 1990), and throughout, equates very specific, stereotypical characteristics of southern white women as essentially a form of hyper- or hegemonic femininity – the notion there is one *idealized, dominant* archetype of womanhood with specific characteristics - selected to comprise the sororities' memberships (Walter, 2020). What Freeman (2020) depicts is what she continually refers to as "the southern aesthetic," a non-threatening, superficially polite, traditionally-minded white woman. The sororities themselves are also described as placing heavy emphasis on a very specific physical appearance as a "requirement" for membership. Freeman (2020) details the "southern aesthetic" as

> … the picture of the playful southern belle, not too serious about studies and ready to woo the men of her social class…[t]he southern lady ideal combined sororities' ideal of true womanhood … moral purity, social grace, and intellect, with the image of an ultrafeminine, sexually non-threatening, and subordinated, middle to upper-class white woman. She could provide the model to train the conservative, twentieth-century sorority woman who would be the new epitome of white American womanhood (p. 31).

From where does this "southern aesthetic" originate? Freeman (2020) outlines that the "southern aesthetic" construct is borne from the *Lost Cause ideology*, a mythological, sanitized, reimaging of the antebellum South, wherein "all whites lived on plantations, all enslaved persons were happy, and racial harmony reigned" (p. 6). In other words, a "feel-good," pre-Civil War "utopia" (p. 6). Through the *Lost Cause* lens, southern white women in particular were viewed as fragile, modest, and virtuous, and sororities were seen as a perfect environment where those characteristics could be further cultivated. This notion of white southern womanhood, also known as the "southern belle" or "southern lady," was transposed onto NPC sororities of the twentieth century, and not solely in the south. The "southern aesthetic" ideal of white womanhood was utilized by sororities in the north as well; non-southern women seemingly preferred the "manufactured image of the genteel, charming southern woman" (Freeman, 2020, p. 59).

Sorority social education and preparation for heterosocial dating

Sororities originally began as a "home away from home" for young women on newly co-educational campuses in the mid-1800s, but by the 1900s, sororities began to shift their emphasis, "from the sorority chapter as a self-contained women's support network to a launching pad for social improvement" (p. 31). The idea was that sorority member social education programs in the early-to-mid 1900s were a "useful tool" and "inventive marketing ploy" (p. 32) when making the case for why sororities should continue to exist on college campuses. Sororities advertised membership education to college administrators as a supplement to the social training a young woman could (or should) learn from her own mother. In fact, deans of women were sold – sororities offered firm guidance through social education programs, codified in standards guidelines (the 1920s saw the introduction of standards and codes of conduct), and heavily managed operations by highly-involved alumnae who "were better at shaping campus social standards than were the universities' administrative rules" (Freeman, 2020, p. 35). However, sorority social education also became the mechanism through which the sorority (alumnae) could monitor, maintain, and perpetuate its own image. Freeman (2020) researched a variety of early sorority manuals and membership handbooks and shares at length that members were instructed about "working and living with others, good hygiene and appearance, healthy interpersonal relationships," but that educational sessions were also designed to reinforce "conventional notions of women's behavior – particularly in regard to women's sexuality – as well as patterns of class and racial stratification" (p. 34). But what was of more interest was the use of sorority as essentially a space of control, where under the watchful eye of alumnae advisors, members were encouraged to refrain from challenging male authority of the time (as it was viewed as unladylike to do so), and therefore maintaining the important reputation and popularity of the campus.

Rush

Sorority membership practices ("rush") and social education in

the early 1900s were collectively engineered to ensure that members only had "appropriate" relationships, both in who was permitted to join, and whom the sorority women could date. Rush was the primary means of perpetuating sororities. Through it, the national sorority chapters used "rush" as a mechanism to design a specific membership composition, placing a high premium on attracting women who actively displayed the southern aesthetic characteristics.

Freeman (2020) describes rush events as "highly choreographed," wherein both the sorority women and the PNMs were on display. Rush events "taught women to judge and criticize one another based on superficial characteristics" (Freeman, 2020, p. 109). From the decorations to the conversations, PNMs are provided "cues" as to what is "acceptable" to the chapter. Goffman's (1959) "presentation of self" framework is just one lens to understand the choreographed nature of sorority recruitment. Noted sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) regarded social life and social interactions as similar to a staged play, where one inhabits and enacts socially constructed roles like that of an actor performing on the stage. Each individual assumes a "character" (or role) and engages in a "performance." Goffman (1959) postulated that the activity of individuals which occurs during a specific period of time is marked by their continuous presence before a particular set of observers, (i.e., an audience), in which case, the characters have some degree of influence over those observers (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). In this scenario, the PNMs are the audience, the sorority women are the stage performers, and the setting for the performance is the recruitment event. (One could go deeper and add in the sorority recruitment counselors as "shills," or the individuals who know what happens both in front of the audience and backstage, but I refer you to another work for additional details.) Each recruitment event is essentially a "front," the part of the individual's performance that regularly functions as a means to define the situation to the audience (Carnell, 2017; Goffman, 1959).

Sorority rush was viewed as a largely discriminatory practice, with white sorority recruitment seen as a performance to perpetuate privilege. The faux familial nature and selective membership criteria of sororities provided just the right conditions to limit those seen as "undesirable" from participation, which in turn, limited the ability to make vital connections for post-graduation life to those few who made the cut.

Perpetuation of conservative values

Fraternity and sorority members can reflect the political environment of a college campus, much like a campus population can reflect that of the general population. However, in the early 1900s, white sororities as collective organizations often refrained from expressing any political belief publically, so as not to upset any member or alumnae. From her research, Freeman (2020) describes that during this period, while individual sorority members were encouraged to know and be informed about the political climate of the day, as a chapter or national organization, the opinion on such was that of no opinion.

The issue of discriminatory membership practices made sororities (and fraternities alike) very visible on campus and in the 1940s, sororities faced anti-sorority agitators who heavily questioned exactly "what kind of democracy" sororities were pushing. (Sororities have a history of sharing members with American heritage organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the American Legion Auxiliary.) Criticism of sororities was centered specifically on rush practices - not simply over "hurt feelings of those rejected," but the commonalities of class, religious, and racial characteristics those who were not selected seemed to share. Freeman (2020) details how the organizations held firm to the notion that as private organizations, they had the right to restrict membership in whatever way they saw fit. The political position of no opinion then became a heavy advocacy for the freedom of association clause. The freedom of assembly clause in the United States Constitution (and subsequent exemption from Title IX) allowed organizations to limit or restrict membership to those "deserving few" (Freeman, 2020).

After 1975

Freeman's (2020) work is primarily focused on the white sorority experience between 1900-1975, however, she concludes the text in 2015. Closing out the book, Freeman (2020) provides a contextual analysis of the University of Alabama's Alpha Phi chapter's viral (and heavily criticized) promotional video, as well as "other peculiar institutions," again, situated within the "southern aesthetic" (p. 187). Described as "featuring a bevy of thin, white, scantily-yet-designer-clad young women with flowing tresses frolicking around their professionally decorated sorority mansion… if you fit this limited image from the spectrum of womanhood, you too could aspire to become [a sorority] woman" (p. 187), the video's content seemingly provides outsiders with "cues" of what is "acceptable" in what an ideal member looks like, specifically with the continued use of physical beauty as a major factor in new member selection. The video is an example that also reasserts Freeman's (2020) argument that national sororities across the country, regardless of region, utilize the display of physical attractiveness and seemingly high socioeconomically inclined white women to "sell" the sorority experience. Concurrently, Beaird, Mobley, and Lawrence (2021) assert that sororities' promotional videos send signals to audiences about how gender, race, and social class are valued. While this specific sorority chapter's video was largely criticized for its "blatant objectification and sexualizing of women," "lack of diversity" (as well as the rather problematic use of specific subpopulations in promotion of the chapter), evidence of much the same is present in other sororities' videos and social media, regardless of region. Sorority recruitment and promotional videos are, "in essence, selling a particular experience" (Beaird, et al, 2021, p. 11). They are the modern form of the 1930s sorority handbook; designed to preserve the organization's popularity on campus with both men and women alike.

So what?

The interest in reading *Women of Discriminating Taste* in the first place was to understand the historical context and originating purposes of sororities. Maybe through reading the historical context of sorority life, from sororities' own historical records, one could better contextualize current events. Think of it as drawing a "throughline" (NPR, 2019) – looking at the past to better understand the present. Please note that there is much more to gain from reading this 192-page text (with an additional 18 pages of footnotes and 13 pages of references) that wouldn't fit in this review, so it is worth one's time to read the entire book.

One thing of note is although social media as a means of communication began in the early 2000s, and platforms and methods seem to crop up, gain popularity (i.e., "go viral") and evolve, the NPC's *Manual of Information* makes no mention of electronic means of communication until its twentieth edition in 2015 (NPC, 2015). While the individual national organizations likely have guidelines surrounding social media, video production, etc., prior to this date, it still seems reactionary, especially when one considers both the trend of sorority recruitment videos and the use of platforms like TikTok (Kirchner & Hampton, 2021). In a relatively recent podcast, hosts Kirchner and Hampton (2021) dedicated an entire episode to the TikToks of sorority women from one specific southern campus, where they felt all the "-isms" were on full display. One host summed up the southern aesthetic like this - "[t] here's a gawking element of looking at [campus] rush and saying, 'look at all these women. Look at these accents. Look at these various [sic] specific kind[s] of femininity. Look how toxic it is. This is white feminism.'" (Kirchner & Hampton, 2021).

Sorority is a singular experience for campus involvement and engagement, even with a membership selection process and educational programs rooted in exclusion, classism, racism, and the performance of a very specific form of femininity, of which there is evidence these behaviors pervasively persist today. An organization's success hinges on its ability to evolve, but even with significantly revised and expanded program offerings, ample policy revisions, and an abundance of necessary initiatives surrounding diversity and the various identities members bring with them to their membership, the question still remains - how far have we really come?

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Additional reading for consideration

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Katherine Carnell

Katherine Carnell recently transitioned to the role of Assistant Vice President for Student Engagement at Goucher College, however, prior to doing so, served as a fraternity and sorority professional on three different campuses. Carnell earned a PhD in higher education administration, where her research focused on sorority recruitment counselors and their transition through and experience of disassociation. She is a member of the Perspectives Editorial Board and is a peer reviewer for the Oracle. A member of an NPC sorority, fall 2022 was the first time since 1997 she hasn't participated in sorority recruitment in some capacity.

FACING OUR FUTURE:

REFLECTIONS ON OUR WORK

KEITH GARCIA

In August of 2015, a piece I wrote for AFA *Perspectives* was published. The piece began with the following statement: "The ugly truth is that entering the field of Fraternity & Sorority Life (FSL) at a time like this leaves much to be desired." I had just accepted my first full-time role post-master's degree as a Coordinator of Fraternity & Sorority Life at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and was asked to contribute a piece about why I was entering the profession. I shared my thoughts "from the eyes of a bright-eyed new professional" about "who we are, what we must do, and where it has the potential to take us" (Garcia, 2015, p. 26). The focus of that piece was the necessity of our field to confront the most glaring challenges we faced. I referenced our propensity to operate from a space of crisis rather than intention and the challenge of reckoning with whether our missions, once perceived as timeless, were dated. I then shifted the focus to my experience within my fraternity and its commitment to support, access, and engagement. Support meant engagement with students beyond the confines of membership, access meant examining the artificial barriers we create to this experience, and engagement was really a call to action around addressing societal ills. I contend that the vision I had for fraternity and sorority life in 2015 is just as critical to our ability to remain relevant in 2022.

I shared that the "FSL community attempts to skirt the ugliness of what is taking place" (Garcia, 2015, p. 26). The ugliness I referenced included hazing deaths, sexual violence, racism, and other behaviors misaligned with the espoused values of the fraternity/sorority experience. That June, Bloomberg published an article titled *Every Time a Fraternity or Sorority Got in Trouble This Year* (Otani & Diamond, 2015). I felt then that we were all too often approaching these intransigent issues from a lens of public relations rather than a desire for meaningful change. I argue we might fall into those traps every so often but I am appreciative of the progress made in spite of it. I think of the partnerships developed and progress to root out hazing through advocacy and legislation. I consider the critical look inward some of our historically/predominantly white fraternities/sororities made, for example, Delta Gamma's contextualization project, and the recent work that is Byron Hurt's documentary shining a nuanced light on hazing from the lens of a member of Omega Psi Phi come to mind.

The level of intention with which we approach our work must continue. We are so much better when we are not consistently playing defense. However, even my statement "we are guided by crisis response" still rings true. Helen Stubbs, who was a Senior Consultant at Gallup when she delivered remarks at a Northwestern University Division of Student Affairs breakfast in 2018, shared "[y] ou should never have the people responsible for putting out fires be responsible for preventing them. You'll never get to the prevention work." While it's imperfect – yes, I know firemen engage in prevention work – the sentiment is well noted.

My experiences as a full-time professional since 2015 have been rich. I navigated the complexities associated with my critique of the fraternity/sorority experience and our roles therein. I consider the ways in which we eliminate barriers to pursuit of membership in fraternity or sorority almost daily. We must be diligent in our continued exploration of ways to make fraternity/sorority accessible. We must continually commit to our work in service of those beyond the confines of our membership, and not just in service projects in the community but right at the heart of the communities we comprise on campuses. I always share with my Hermanos the expectations I have for our fraternity to serve Latinx students without respect to their membership in our organization. It is that work that is the most meaningful and the most powerful tool for inspiring a desire for membership. I have experienced the personal and professional injuries of racism. Supporting students and colleagues through the challenges of frequent manifestations of white supremacy, sometimes expressed by the students and stakeholders with whom we directly work. I am grateful for the continued development of affinity spaces so those of us holding marginalized identities might find a sense of safety – as imperfect as these spaces might be. Our organizations should be places where members experience belonging as their whole selves rather than exposure to bigotry from amongst our ranks. It was great to see so many groups that would have never uttered the phrase "Black Lives Matter" respond to the racial justice reckonings of 2020. But in 2022 we are still experiencing the harms of organizations too afraid to respond to societal ills. Know that our future and relevancy is indeed rooted in our abilities to evolve toward positions firmly planted in equity and justice. If you have not already heard from the more activist minded student bodies, listen to someone who has firsthand experience responding to their demands that we be part of a more just world or find ourselves obsolete.

And while all these challenges persist, I remain hopeful about fraternities and sororities. While the light may dim sometimes, I have not lost the spark that keeps me in this work. We have so much opportunity ahead of us. We can create new infrastructure to ensure our organizations and campuses are meeting this generation of students where they are. We can further the progress made and be bolder in our declarations about who we are and our relevance today. For instance, I think about the progress made on trans inclusive policies and I ask myself, "This is great, but what more can we do so that policies aren't the only thing that is inclusive in this experience for our trans siblings?" How do we continue to challenge ourselves as professionals and ask those difficult and uncomfortable questions about the work we are doing and whether it stacks up against our potential? I am encouraged by the newer professionals in our field who keep challenging me to innovate, as well as the seasoned professionals who have weathered the storms to stay in this field. For us to realize a "successful future" and "truly address" our issues we'll need to continue reflecting on "who we are, what we must do, and where it has the potential to take us." I can commit to standing alongside you as peers to do the difficult work of ensuring fraternity and sorority life remains a relevant part of the collegiate and alumni experience.

Keith D. Garcia

Keith D. Garcia currently serves as the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life at the Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. In his role he is tasked with setting and realizing the vision, purpose, and strategic priorities for a community that is central to the student experience at Northwestern. He leads a team responsible for the development and delivery of education on leadership, social justice, and harm reduction. He serves as the primary advisor to the executive leadership of multiple councils and chapters across the Interfraternity Council, Multicultural Greek Council, National Pan-Hellenic Council, and Panhellenic Association. Beyond Northwestern University he is involved as a leadership educator, consultant, and author. Keith teaches within the Leadership Minor at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and travels the country supporting campuses, fraternal organizations, and community groups in tackling issues related to leadership from a lens of justice and equity. He has contributed articles and book chapters to publications focused on the fraternity/sorority experience. His education includes a Bachelor of Business Administration from the City University of New York's Bernard M. Baruch College and a Master of Arts in Educational Administration-Student Affairs from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He is a member of La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc. and credits his membership as a catalyst for his journey into this work. He has served his fraternity in various capacities from the local to the national levels, most recently serving on the Board of Directors and as a representative to the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations.

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IT'S TIME!

PAUL R. DEWINE, ED.D.

I recently returned to higher education from retirement to an interim fraternity and sorority life position to assist my former university while they conducted a search. I learned fraternity and sorority life has made some strides forward since my initial time with this role 40 years ago. However, I was disheartened that some of the same problems continue to exist, alcohol/drug abuse, sexual assault/violence, and hazing. There are also too many campuses where fraternity and sorority members are not excelling academically which is supposed to be a cornerstone of the fraternal experience. It's time for some substantial changes to address these and other ongoing challenges.

Leadership, knowledge, culture, citizenship, service, and excellence should be the most relevant components of the fraternity/sorority experience.

Alcohol

It's time to take alcohol and other substances out of our chapter houses, including illegal and non-prescription drugs, and tobacco/vaping. All social functions with alcohol should be held at a licensed and insured third-party vendor/venue with licensed bartenders.

The dominant role alcohol plays in fraternity and sorority life must end. "Male fraternity members who lived in fraternity houses during college had the highest levels of binge drinking and marijuana use relative to non-members and non-students in young adulthood that continued through age 35, controlling for adolescent sociodemographic and other characteristics. At age 35, 45% of the residential fraternity members reported alcohol use disorder (AUD) symptoms reflecting mild to severe AUDs; their adjusted odds of experiencing AUD symptoms at age 35 were higher than all other college and noncollege groups except non-residential fraternity members. Residential sorority members had higher odds of AUD symptoms at age 35 when compared with their non college female peers" (McCabe, Sean & Veliz, Philip & Schulenberg, John, 2018).

The role and presence of alcohol must be diminished and not such a significant part of fraternities and sororities. Leadership, knowledge, culture, citizenship, service, and excellence should be the most relevant components of the fraternity/sorority experience.

Sexual Violence

It's time for a zero-tolerance policy for sexual assault/violence. There must be 100% cooperation between the involved chapter(s) and the institution for a full college led investigation. The wall of silence cannot be tolerated. If there is a chapter culture of sexual exploitation or a code of silence, there must either be a comprehensive intervention by the national organization and/or local alumni to weed out the problem or the chapter must be closed. Education alone cannot solve the problem if the chapter culture is misogynistic.

Sororities and College Panhellenics have the power to force significant change. Some College Panhellenic Councils have been taking action to confront sexual violence by establishing moratoriums on social events until the issue can be better addressed, including reviews of fraternity risk management practices. Although all fraternities have such policies, many of them are not followed or enforced. National fraternities must be more proactive in this regard. In addition to the lack of risk management enforcement by the fraternity chapters, some sorority chapters are not supporting the Panhellenic move to curb social events. These sororities are more concerned about their "social status" than the health and safety of their members. This attitude must change.

"Research on fraternity men has continuously found that they are much more likely to commit sexual violence than men not in fraternities. In 2005, a study found that fraternity men were over 3 times more likely to commit sexual violence than men not in fraternities (Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005). Two years later, Foubert and his colleagues found an identical figure in their study, wherein fraternity men were 3 times more likely to commit sexual violence than men not in fraternities. An interesting facet of the latter study is that men who joined fraternities were just as likely to have committed sexual violence prior to college as men who did not join. Thus, it was not men who had a prior history of sexual violence who gravitated toward fraternities. Rather, it appeared to be the fraternity culture itself that was responsible for a threefold increase in rape among fraternity men" (Foubert, Newberry, & Tatum, 2007).

Pledging/Membership Development

It's time for pledging to end. "Since 2000, there have been more than 50 hazing-related deaths. The causes are varied - heatstroke, drowning, alcohol poisoning, head injury, asphyxia, cardiac arrest - but the tragedies almost always involve a common denominator: Greek life" (Kesslen, 2021).

Eliminating pledging and implementing a four-year membership development program is a solution. A comprehensive program designed to build balanced leaders and engaged citizens is essential. The fraternal experience should be about the growth of its members and take into consideration each members' current level of development. Having a self paced program running continuously would allow participants to begin and end the program at any time. Participants with relevant experience could move through the program at an accelerated pace. Such an approach would encourage juniors and seniors to join and participate, adding an additional level of experience and maturity to the chapter. Please also note that "pledge class unity" is superfluous. The focus should be on uniting the new members to the chapter.

Ultimately, chapters that haze should be closed.

Academic Standards

It's time for fraternities and sororities to establish higher standards for academic achievement. The minimum GPA to remain in good standing should be at least a 3.000 on a 4.000 scale or one to two tenths above the all-men's/all women's cumulative GPA respectively, whichever is higher. A 3.0 is not a strong GPA if the campus average is a 3.3. Shouldn't we be seeking members who are at least above average? Academic excellence and knowledge are the cornerstone of fraternity/sorority life and thus, high academic standards must reflect this priority.

Recruitment

It's time for recruitment to be more proactive. Fraternities typically advertise on campus and wait for prospective members to come to them. The emphasis is passive instead of an intentional outreach to the various potential member constituencies on campus, such as student government and student organization leaders, RA's, orientation leaders, international students, transfer students, juniors and seniors, scholars, and varsity athletes. Shouldn't the IFC and individual chapters reach out to these populations directly?

Since the National Panhellenic Conference manages the recruitment process for their member sororities they must also consider a more proactive approach. Collegiate Panhellenic officers and recruitment guides could reach out to the same populations (mentioned previously) and encourage them to participate in the recruitment process. This approach also applies to NPHC groups as well as Multicultural fraternities and sororities.

The National Panhellenic Conference must also review its current recruitment process. Many campuses still have a "cheerleader camp" type of recruitment atmosphere with singing, cheering, uniforms, and decorations. This is not what a sorority is about. While this may appeal to some potential members, there are many women on campus who are discouraged from participating due to this superficial approach.

There must also be a strategic marketing campaign to attract the top students on campus. How are we presenting the fraternity and sorority experience? Are we exhibiting superficial social scenes or are we showing students in research labs talking to faculty? Are we presenting a group of students smiling arm in arm or are we showing a group of students serving the community? Are we demonstrating leadership or social hedonism? There must be intention in marketing and advertising.

Alumni/ae Involvement

It's time for more alumni involvement with sororities and fraternities. Comprehensive alumni involvement must be a priority with headquarters staff helping by identifying local alumni. Chapters could also utilize headquarters to locate alumni from their own chapter who live at a distance and would be willing to serve as a virtual advisor. If the pandemic has

shown us anything, it is that virtual/ Zoom meetings can work well. This opens a whole new realm in alumni advising capacity.

Faculty Involvement

It's time for more faculty engagement with our chapters. Astin (1993) found that with the exception of the peer group, faculty had the most significant impact on the undergraduate development of a student. Such interactions included participating with faculty research or assisting with teaching and interacting with faculty outside of the classroom. This faculty student interaction also contributed significantly to a student's grade point average, persistence to a degree, and pursuit of further education in graduate school.

Because academics need to be a cornerstone of the fraternity experience, having faculty involved with the chapter at some level is critical. This involvement could be as much as the role of a chapter advisor or in a more limited role as a once per quarter/semester interactive program or lecture. Some campuses have established a "Coffee with a Prof" program where the institution covers the cost for coffee at a campus location for a student and their professor to encourage student/ faculty interaction. The fraternity and sorority community could offer this type of program to its members or approach the institution to do so.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

It's time for more of our chapters to embrace diversity. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are paramount in our society and thus, are an important part of our educational institutions. Fraternities and sororities must also be a part of this educational process to be in congruence with the mission of their host institution. Many strides have been made by some fraternalorganizations in this arena, including the implementation of non discrimination policies for gay and transgender students and educational programs focused on the importance of diversity and inclusion. "Greek EDI Peer Educators" are an example of a successful campus diversity program. Our success in this area varies from campus to campus and also among national organizations, but can be determined by the level of diversity reflected in our chapters and the behaviors and organizational culture exhibited by our organizations. Are we having themed events that are derogatory or insensitive to others? Are we targeting diverse members during recruitment? Do we have international students in our organizations? Are we ethnically and culturally diverse? Do we have openly gay members? Do we have divergent political points of view? Diversity is an important educational experience and only makes our chapters stronger and our members more well rounded and better prepared to enter a diverse society and workforce.

Ritual

It's time to dust off that ritual book and put it into daily practice. Academic excellence, knowledge, service, leadership, brotherhood/ sisterhood, integrity, virtue, citizenship are all pillars within our rituals. Let's find ways to incorporate these pillars into the daily lives of our members and continuously strive for excellence.

Action Needed

It's time for more of the national fraternities and sororities to take stronger actions to address these problems and work more collaboratively with their host institutions. There are too few of them taking a strong proactive approach. Are their membership fees more important than student health and safety? Institutions need to hire more seasoned professionals to work with chapters. This type of investment and experience is necessary to hold our chapters accountable and help them to flourish.

This perspective is informed by my past volunteer positions within my national fraternity, as a former fraternity/sorority advisor, and as a former dean of students.

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Paul R. DeWine, Ed.D.

Paul R. DeWine, Ed.D. is retired from a 32-year career in higher education. He has served as the Dean of Student Affairs of Earl Warren College at the University of California-San Diego and as the Associate Dean of Students at Purdue University. He has also served as the national president for AFA and chair of the Sigma Phi Epsilon National Leadership Committee.

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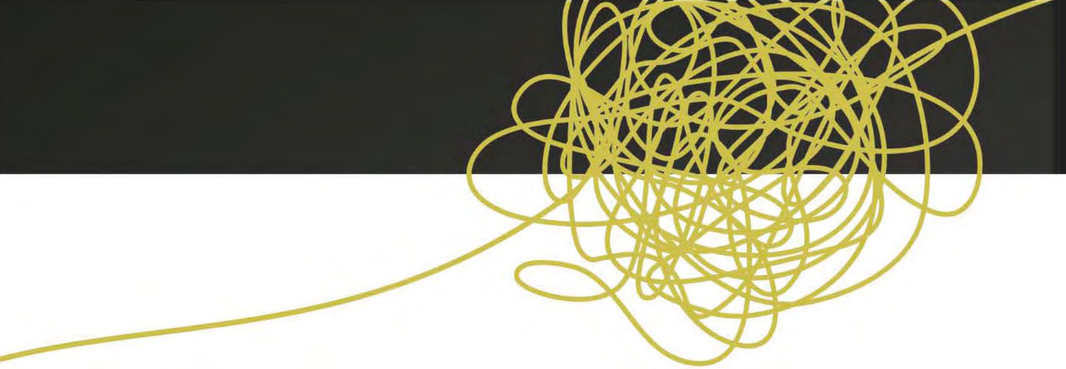
EMBRACING OUR MESSINESS

NICOLE L. DEFEO

Early in my tenure at Delta Phi Epsilon, I was lamenting my position of having to navigate a great deal of conflict between many people who wanted different things from our organization. A strong mentor of mine quoted Tim Keller, "People are messy; therefore relationships will be messy. Don't be surprised by the messiness." I repeat this sentiment regularly at my office to my staff and our members. Those of us working in the fraternal industry work with people, so we need to prepare for the messiness.

As I was contemplating what to write for this article, I started digging into the weeds of our experience. I reflected on what I have heard and seen that do not work well in today's National Panhellenic Conference experience. I reviewed the policies and procedures. I talked to colleagues about their opinions and thoughts. The more I learned, the more I realized the things most people complain about are symptoms of a much larger issue. Things like challenging the norms and practices of recruitment, focusing on that which we can control like setting total/quota, or as some would say "fiddling while Rome burns" are all fronts for what needs addressing. I believe there is a future for the fraternity/sorority community, but only if we tackle the root cause of all these issues—the acceptance of the "messiness" of people with non-judgment.



"People are messy; therefore relationships will be messy. Don't be surprised by the messiness."

In order to get to correct the root cause of acceptance without judgment, we must agree upon a shared understanding of where we are today in our messiness. According to Psychology Today, "Judgments are expectations based on pre-programmed mindsets or scripts…". It is human nature to judge. For example, sororities that have fewer members judge those with many members as large and impersonal, while larger-sized chapters may think smaller-sized groups are strugglers or unpopular. Philosophies, policies, and procedures of some organizations conflict with those of others. In all cases, the outlier is judged for their position by the in-crowd. If we can agree that "messiness" equals difference, then we can begin the fundamental conversation around acceptance of others from the base of our community pyramid or the individual level all the way to the top, where leadership exists. This pyramid consists of thousands of members in this experience together with their unique approaches, ideas, thoughts, and baggage. Yikes, that is messy!

Now that we have our baseline understanding, it is helpful to look at specific examples. Delta Phi Epsilon (DPhiE), is often the outlier. We do things differently. Many would say we have the benefit of being "younger" at just over 100 years old, more nimble with less engrained social mores. They might be correct. The obvious example of our difference surfaces in our policies around membership selection and chapter self-governance. DPhiE is leading conversations around non-binary membership in women's spaces. In 2017, when the dialogue began, we were met with a great deal of resistance. Here comes the messiness. Fear, anger, and mistrust of motives were the fuel that escalated the mess into a straight dumpster fire. Thank goodness for fire extinguishers.

As time has gone by, our community members have had the chance to digest the evolving gender norms and the embers of fear have faded out for others. A healthy dialogue is happening and needed change is coming. So many things could have derailed our progress. DPhiE could have sat at the table silently or we could have succumbed to fatigue and walked away entirely. Instead, we stood our ground for something different, an evolution for the current generation of undergraduate members became a revolution for us. We used the governance system to start a dialogue through the proper channels within the system of which we voluntarily agreed to be a part. We put forth motions to change the policy that we believe needed a change.

There are two lessons learned along our journey. The most important lesson is that bravery with an open heart can clear the "messiness." It took courage to speak up for what we believed was right. It was also brave of those with differing opinions to share their fear. The second lesson is more complex. Understanding the governance and leadership systems within your organization and then within the greater community is critical. Navigating which governing body serves which constituency and in which ways is sometimes like solving the Rubik's Cube. That last part was a subtle nod to my GenX friends. Change in a complicated society is difficult and takes work, but it is coming. Though, some would say it's not coming fast enough.

Evolution and innovation require integrity and trust. Recently, I heard a colleague from another sorority say that trust is built through repetition. Relationships take time to foster. After 15 years of sitting at many tables of leadership in this arena, I can say with confidence that "messiness" is often the enemy of the aforementioned evolution. Building an understanding that everyone here wants the experience to pass down to the next generation is critical in moving the needle, and it takes time and patience. Trust is important in building the social clout to make a change, but it does not stand alone in the formula for evolution and innovation. Integrity is needed in equal measure. Integrity generates trust. They go hand in hand. At DPhiE, integrity is aligned with our value of love. We have a desire to "fix the world" or innovate in our communities to be more inclusive of diversity of thought.

Our mission is to create a sisterhood experience rich in tradition, innovation, and opportunities for growth. Many of our members question the juxtaposition of tradition and innovation. You also may be wondering, how can you innovate if you are tied to traditions, some that may not have a place in society any longer? The answer is through integrity. Acting with transparency in situations where traditions need to be unpacked is critical. It allows us to keep what is important and discard what is unnecessary or no longer acceptable, like doing away with hazing or policies that create barriers to this very valuable experience for those seeking to forward women's issues.

Many people approach DPhiE with questions about our fundamental philosophies and values. They ask why we stay in a system in which we perhaps no longer "fit". The answer is complex, but the simple breakdown is we believe we can shepherd change from within. We believe difficult conversations can be held and differences can be celebrated rather than judged. If you want to shepherd change from within your organization, within the your campus system, or even the larger fraternal world, I would encourage you to follow these steps: Ask questions to seek true understanding of what is happening from as many perspectives as you can garner, educate yourself on the system governing policy, as well as, those of the National Panhellenic, encourage opposing dialogue and take action to make a change.

As the world, students' interests, and our organizations evolve, I hope you will reflect on what is best for your organization, your campus, and the fraternal industry, be courageous, and lead with an open and non-judgemental heart. If you want to be a part of the evolution and revolution, we ask you to join us, and let's get messy together.

Ask questions to seek true understanding of what is happening from as many perspectives as you can garner

Educate yourself on the system governing policy, as well as, those of the National Panhellenic

Encourage opposing dialogue and take action to make a change

Nicole L. DeFeo

Nicole DeFeo has over 25 years of experience building and leading non-profit organizations from the ground up. An accomplished strategist and marketer, her vision and drive have taken small struggling non-profits to thriving successful organizations in short periods of time. Her performance has been recognized in the national market of non-profits through awards for marketing, mentoring and exceptional achievement.

As the current International Executive Director for Delta Phi Epsilon Sorority, Educational Foundation and National Development Corporation, Nicole manages three separate non-profit organizations and is responsible for over $20 million in assets and board development for each board of trustees.

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